

In Brief: State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)

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Introduction

Established in November 2011, the State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) is the U.S. government's second attempt to promote more effective civilian efforts to prevent and manage crises and conflict under State Department leadership. The 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) recommended the creation of the bureau with a mandate to provide the "institutional focus for policy and operational solutions for crisis, conflict, and instability."¹ CSO's current concept of its mission—while still a work in progress—is more limited than that mandated by statute for its predecessor organization, the Office of the Coordinator of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), or for that matter specified in the QDDR. Under Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations Frederick D. Barton, CSO currently focuses on improving the ways and means that the United States provides assistance to prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of conflict in unstable environments. CSO has deemphasized S/CRS's preparation for sizable state-building post-conflict missions, in particular by substantially downsizing the interagency Civilian Response Corps (CRC) originally designed for stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) missions.

Members of Congress may raise concerns, including CSO's potential contribution to U.S. foreign policy and national security; its overlap with other agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); and the utility of S/CRS's CRC model of a large interagency civilian capability for S&R missions. Key U.S. documents emphasize conflict prevention and management efforts as crucial to U.S. interests,² but some policymakers also view such efforts skeptically. Members may look to CSO's activities as indicators of the feasibility and utility of such missions. Given the potential overlap of many U.S. government agencies' and offices' activities in these areas, Members may also look to the CSO experience for guidance in clarifying interagency relations in such efforts and the appropriate nature of a State Department leadership role. They may also wish to assess whether a downsized CRC could respond to future needs.

Intended as a primer on CSO, this report provides a brief overview of the bureau. It begins with short descriptions of CSO's origins, organization, functions, challenges, and missions. It then highlights CSO's changes to S/CRS's interagency stabilization and reconstruction arrangements. It concludes with a brief discussion of major areas of congressional concern. This report includes information on CSO funding levels. It will be updated as warranted.

CSO Origins

CSO represents an evolution in the development of U.S. civilian capabilities to prevent and manage conflict, to stabilize transitions from conflict, and to create the bases for lasting peace in post-conflict situations. CSO subsumes its predecessor office, S/CRS, a bold but problematic organizational initiative that enjoyed strong support from some Members of Congress and Department of Defense officials, as well as a congressional mandate. Despite that support, as some experts predicted, the "S/CRS experiment was never ... to have smooth sailing; it was

¹ U.S. Department of State and United States Agency for International Development, *The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, Washington, DC, December 15, 2010. Henceforth cited as QDDR. For more on the QDDR, see CRS Report R41173, *Foreign Aid Reform, National Strategy, and the Quadrennial Review*, by Susan B. Epstein.

² See, for example, QDDR, pp. 22, 121-133, 144-149; Office of the President, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, DC, May 2010, pp. 27, 47-48; and Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington, DC, February 2010, pp. 13-14.

created to be an agent of change in an underresourced area, operating within a bureaucratic environment already marked by overlapping equities and widely accepted leadership.”³

S/CRS was created in 2004 because some Members and other policymakers perceived a need for a State Department office to provide strong leadership in developing the concepts and capacity for U.S. civilian agencies to plan and conduct interagency conflict and stabilization operations. This perception resulted in large part from the U.S. military’s inability to field adequate numbers of appropriate personnel to perform tasks in the aftermath of conflicts in the 1990s in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans that many defense experts believed would be better conducted by civilians. (The first detailed public proposal for a State Department coordinating office was contained in a 2004 study by the National Defense University.)⁴ It was underscored for many policymakers by the difficulties the U.S. military encountered in the Iraq invasion of 2003 and its continuing challenges in managing the situation in Afghanistan after the 2001 intervention. In 2008, Congress established the position of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and the S/CRS office in law with responsibility for coordinating interagency stabilization and reconstruction contingency plans and organizing civilian agencies’ efforts. These included efforts to “prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations and to help reconstruct and stabilize a country or region that is at risk of, in, or is in transition from, conflict or civil strife.”⁵

During its seven years of operation, S/CRS encountered many obstacles. It met bureaucratic resistance within the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) because of the overlapping functions of State Department regional bureaus and perceived overlaps with USAID offices, as well as with the coordination responsibilities of U.S. ambassadors abroad. Some observers stated that had insufficient support from the Secretary of State and others in the State Department hierarchy to overcome that resistance. Skepticism from congressional appropriators resulted in what some analysts considered initially meager budgets. Some also felt that S/CRS, which spent its early years developing operating concepts, was not persuasive in selling its product, and that many policymakers did not understand its mandate and role. The net result was that the office was widely perceived as unable to play an effective role in formulating or coordinating interagency policies and plans for conflict prevention, management, and transition, and stabilization missions. Despite such negative perceptions, some analysts credit S/CRS with developing important stabilization and reconstruction tools, including the Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization and, with USAID, the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework.⁶

³ James A. Schear and Leslie B. Curtin, “Complex Operations: Recalibrating the State Department’s Role,” in *Civilian Surge: Key to Complex Operations*, ed. Hans Binnendijk and Patrick M. Cronin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2009), pp. 108-109. Hereafter referred to as *Civilian Surge*.

⁴ National Defense University, *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, Washington, DC, 2004.

⁵ When the Coordinator position and office were codified in 2008 as the part of the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2009 (RSCMA) in the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for FY2009 (P.L. 110-417, Title XVI), the Coordinator’s functions included “coordinating with relevant agencies to develop interagency contingency plans to mobilize and deploy civilian personnel to address the various types of such [stabilization and reconstruction] crises” and “entering into appropriate arrangements with agencies to carry out [stabilization and reconstruction] activities....” (For a complete list of the Coordinator’s functions as enumerated in law, see CRS Report RL32862, p. 11.) The quote is from the RSCMA Findings section.

⁶ For more information on the history, problems, and accomplishments of S/CRS, see CRS Report RL32862, *Peacekeeping/Stabilization and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on the Civilian Response/Reserve Corps and other Civilian Stabilization and Reconstruction Capabilities*, by Nina M. Serafino, and CRS Report R42133, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino, Catherine Dale, and Pat Towell. Also see Andrea Barbara Baumann, “Silver Bullet or Time Suck? Revisiting the Role of Interagency Coordination in Complex Operations,” *Prism*, vol. 3, no. 3 (June 2012),

At first, the Obama Administration seemed to embrace S/CRS and the other elements of the earlier vision for strong State Department leadership of an interagency civilian capability for conflict response and management. Nevertheless, according to some analysts, key Obama Administration officials were skeptical of that vision and the S/CRS mission.

The 2010 QDDR emphasized the need for a strong role for the State Department and other civilian agencies in crisis and conflict prevention and response, identifying this as a “core State [Department] mission that must be closely supported by USAID and many other U.S. government agencies.”⁷ However, it also outlined a plan for a new civilian organizational order to accomplish this mission, including the creation of the CSO Bureau to absorb S/CRS and “build upon but go beyond the mandate and capabilities of S/CRS.”⁸ Other features of the QDDR’s plan included a restructuring of the CRC and an expansion of USAID’s capacity to conduct conflict programs. The QDDR delineated a “clearer” division of labor between State and USAID, which were directed to work closely together (under State leadership) and with the National Security Staff and other relevant agencies “to ensure unified interagency guidance, planning, and execution for conflict prevention and response.”⁹ Despite the QDDR statement that CSO would “go beyond” the S/CRS mandate, in practice CSO thus far seems to exercise a more modest role than that envisioned by the original S/CRS mandate.

CSO Organization and Functions¹⁰

CSO is one of five bureaus and two offices reporting to the Under Secretary of Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. Of average size for a State Department bureau, CSO has a staff of 166 as of August 2012. Personnel include 14 Foreign Service Officers, 88 other government employees, and 64 contractors. CSO consists of seven offices organized under four rubrics: (1) Policy and Programs, (2) Overseas Operations, (3) Civilian Response Corps and Deployment Support, and (4) Partnerships and Learning and Training.¹¹

The Assistant Secretary for Conflict and Stabilization serves as the Secretary of State’s senior advisor on conflict and instability issues in fragile states. He also manages the bureau. Through the bureau, the CSO Assistant Secretary exercises five key functions, among others.¹² Two of the functions call for the Assistant Secretary to promote interagency cooperation by

- collaborating with “relevant partners,” including the Department of State bureaus, the Department of Defense (DOD), and NATO, “to harmonize civilian and military plans and operations pertaining to conflict prevention, crisis response, and stabilization,” and

pp. 33-46, hereafter referred to as *Silver Bullet*; Dane F. Smith, Jr., *U.S. Peacefare: Organizing American Peace-Building Operations* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), pp. 84-106 (hereafter referred to as *U.S. Peacefare*); and *Civilian Surge*, pp. 93-114.

⁷ QDDR, pp. 123-124.

⁸ QDDR, p. 135.

⁹ QDDR, p. 134.

¹⁰ This section is largely drawn from the author’s interviews with CSO officials.

¹¹ For a description of their functions, see U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Manual*, Volume 1 - Organization and Functions, Washington, DC, 1 FAM 470, <http://www.state.gov>.

¹² As described in the U.S. State Department Position Description for Assistant Secretary for Conflict and Stabilization Operations, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, December 20, 2011.

- working “with other U.S. government agencies to strengthen the U.S. Government capacity to plan and conduct conflict prevention, crisis response, and stabilization operations.”

Two others assign the Assistant Secretary responsibility for

- leading the “development of CSO as the home bureau for State Department expertise on conflict prevention, crisis response, and stabilization,” and
- formulating and implementing policies and proposals, and providing policy counsel at decision-making levels on conflict prevention, crisis response, and stabilization policies and programs “under the overall direction of and in coordination with the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.”

Finally, a fifth function charges the Assistant Secretary with a leadership role in developing and deploying “a strong civilian response capability [for the moment at least, the CRC] including necessary surges of personnel and resources.”

The CSO Assistant Secretary also is Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, a post that Congress established in law in 2008 with more extensive responsibilities and duties than those assigned to the CSO Assistant Secretary.¹³ In practice, as reflected in the Assistant Secretary’s narrower assigned responsibilities, the concept of a State Department interagency coordinator with broad responsibilities—planning, directing, and ensuring coordination of U.S. civilian crisis and conflict management efforts, in essence leading such efforts across all government agencies—appears to be in abeyance. Perhaps as a substitute, the QDDR calls for State and USAID to coordinate with other agencies, through a National Security Staff-led process to develop an International Operational Response Framework “that establishes the systems and procedures necessary to ensure transparent and accountable leadership structures and agency lines of responsibility” to “deliver the full range of U.S. international disaster, crisis, and conflict response resources.”¹⁴

The CSO Approach

Under Assistant Secretary Barton’s guidance, CSO has taken a different approach from that mandated for S/CRS. Given S/CRS’s difficulties in fulfilling its broad mandate, CSO does not aspire to exercise a leadership role in conflict response by taking charge of planning and directing the efforts of multiple agencies. Nor does it contemplate the conduct of broad, interagency state-building missions as one of its functions. Instead, according to CSO officials, CSO seeks to encourage and facilitate interagency efforts to promote peace through small-scale, targeted assistance (an approach S/CRS was turning to in its latter years) in unstable pre- and post-conflicts environments, and to “mainstream” the concept of conflict prevention as part of U.S. diplomacy and assistance efforts.

The CSO Bureau seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Instill in U.S. embassies and other parts of relevant U.S. government agencies a sense of urgency in taking proactive responses to prevent conflict.
- Bring a “strategic focus” to conflict prevention efforts, prioritizing the use of potential tools for recipient countries and quickly delivering its targeted assistance.
- Build on local knowledge, interest, and activities to fashion sustainable responses.

¹³ See footnote 5.

¹⁴ QDDR, pp. 141-142.

- Work more effectively with other international partners, including other foreign governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

To demonstrate that it can achieve the first three goals, CSO has been working in two ways. First, it selected as priority missions four countries in which the United States has significant interest and where CSO perceived opportunities to prevent violence and effect change (see below.) In addition, CSO offers itself as a “convener” of discussions on conflict prevention and a “driver” of interagency analyses to develop integrated strategies with clear priorities for assistance based on local needs of the potential recipients. CSO personnel seek to work with a lead person—a special envoy, an ambassador, an official in a regional bureau—to identify situations where a tailored, interagency effort could result in preventing conflict, assist with conflict transitions, or promote stability. CSO officials state that conversations with U.S. Embassy country teams (i.e., the ambassador and the representatives from U.S. agencies stationed at the embassy)¹⁵ produce an awareness of the assistance that CSO’s “conflict specialists” can provide and result in more targeted interagency approaches to U.S. assistance.

To achieve its fourth goal, CSO is reaching out beyond the U.S. government to locate experts to help implement its programs. CSO officials are creating networks with non-governmental organizations, local governments, and academia in the United States and abroad to locate people with the proven reputations for technical expertise and intercultural skills.

CSO officials recognize that the bureau must demonstrate the utility of a conflict management approach to supplement traditional diplomacy and assistance programs to those unfamiliar with or skeptical of such work. CSO officials are taking steps to do so. Innovations include a systematic approach to drafting plans for such efforts, with planners putting in writing a specific “theory of change,” which identifies underlying assumptions about why change will occur and the process through which an activity will achieve its goal. These detailed written plans are expected to facilitate assessment and evaluation.

CSO Activities Abroad

CSO identified Burma, Kenya, Syria, and the northern tier of Central America as its priority countries, where it is focusing most of its efforts. CSO intends to demonstrate success in these activities by the end of the first quarter of 2013.

- In Burma, as part of the country’s peace process, CSO personnel are reaching out to international and Burmese partners to develop community-based approaches to landmine identification, removal, and education, as well as the rehabilitation of landmine survivors.
- In Kenya, CSO personnel are supporting the U.S. Embassy, the Kenyan government, and civil society efforts to prevent violence and promote dialogue in key regions before the elections in 2013.
- For Syria, CSO is working with Syrian civilian opposition groups located in Turkey, providing training and equipment to facilitate networking, communications, and preparations for governing in the event of regime change.
- In the northern four Central American countries—Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—CSO seeks to reduce violence with support for public security

¹⁵ For more on the working of U.S. Embassy country teams, see CRS Report R42133, pp. 39-40.

reform. For instance, CSO deployed experts to help Honduran prosecutors and investigators, and to improve relations between citizens and police.

During FY2012, continuing into FY2013, CSO has also been active in several other countries. In Liberia, it has helped to investigate election violence (see below). In Senegal, it offered conflict analysis, prevention, and mitigation support. In Central Africa, it is encouraging defections from the Lord's Resistance Army.

CSO Assistance: Investigating Election Violence in Liberia

One example of the "targeted expert assistance" offered by CSO was in November 2011, when, at the request of the U.S. Ambassador, CSO provided an expert in criminal investigations to assist a Liberian investigatory commission. Under the guidance of a CRC member from the Justice Department, Liberians investigated gunfire that killed one person and wounded eight during a rally the week before the presidential run-off election. Investigators interviewed scores of people, turning up a video clip. In that clip, one investigator spotted a man, in civilian clothes, shooting. That shooter was identified as a high-ranking member of the presidential guard. The CRC advisor then spotted another shooter, a policeman in uniform. When members of the Liberian commission reviewed the clip, one noticed a third shooter. As a result, police were suspended and the President of Liberia took responsibility.

Summarized from a speech by Assistant Secretary Barton, May 2012, at the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Administration and Reduction of the Civilian Response Corps

The CSO Bureau is responsible for managing the Civilian Response Corps (CRC), an interagency unit created in the mid-2000s to provide a broad array of civilian skills needed to help stabilize countries threatened by violence, and to stabilize and reconstruct countries experiencing transitions from conflict and the immediate aftermath of conflict. Although CRC members were originally intended to serve primarily in post-conflict stabilization missions,¹⁶ its members also have engaged in preventive activities and serve in current CSO missions. During FY2012, CSO began to substantially reduce the CRC, citing decreased funding and altered perceptions of its utility. Its intent is to reduce the core unit of the CRC to about 50 members, about a fifth of its original planned strength.

When formally established in 2008,¹⁷ CRC was to comprise an active component (CRC-A) of about 250 U.S. government employees who could deploy within 48 hours, a standby component (CRC-S) of some 2,000 U.S. government employees who could deploy within 30 days, and a 2,000-member reserve component (CRC-R) of experts from state governments and other public institutions and from the private sector who would be available for deployment in 45-60 days. CRC-A and CRC-S components were first drawn from eight U.S. agencies. In addition to the State Department and USAID, contributing agencies were the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Justice, and Treasury. (In 2010, Treasury withdrew and the Departments of Energy and Transportation were added.)

¹⁶ In establishing the CRC at a time when U.S. officials and analysts anticipated future U.S. military missions would include periodic interventions to stabilize countries in crises abroad, the George W. Bush Administration intended the CRC to be a cohesive civilian unit, drawing from many civilian agencies which conduct activities abroad. Its primary purpose was to deploy with U.S. military troops as part of U.S. military interventions. It would assist the U.S. military with stabilization activities, gradually taking the lead during the transition from conflict. As the military departed, CRC members would remain through the years of post-conflict stabilization. The concept had some strong supporters, particularly among those who believed that the U.S. military is not the appropriate provider of governance and other state-building assistance.

¹⁷ The CRC was authorized in the same law that provided S/CRS its mandate (i.e., P.L. 110-417, Title XVI).

The expense of institutionalizing and maintaining the CRC was, however, an impediment to its implementation, and according to CSO, a primary reason for now cutting it back to about a quarter of its planned size. While CRC-S members are no cost to the State Department until they deploy, CRC-A members from other agencies (other than USAID) are stationed at their home agencies but are in positions paid under the State Department budget. Another important factor was CSO's redefinition of its stabilization mission to providing limited, targeted short-term assistance, especially assistance that would enhance civilian security, rather than maintaining the capacity to provide broader state-building assistance. Nevertheless, supporters of maintaining strong interagency participation in the CRC argue that its members were providing valuable services that contributed to violence prevention. (See the discussion of an interagency civilian capability in the "Issues for Congress" section below.)

As of July 2012, the CRC-A and CRC-S stood at somewhat under half their planned strength. (The CRC-R was not established, as Congress did not provide funding.) CSO plans to reduce membership still further through attrition, with a final goal of 53 for the CRC-A. There is no established revised goal for the CRC-S, but it now stands at about 500. (See the **Appendix**, **Figure A-1** and **Figure A-2**.) In addition, CSO closed its warehouse in Springfield, VA, and disposed of CRC vehicles, communications equipment, and other gear that was to provide independence for deployed CRC members.

See the **Appendix** for charts of CRC-A and CRC-S membership.

Funding¹⁸

FY2013 is the first year in which CSO operates on funding intended for that office. Through FY2012, it operated on funds appropriated to the Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO) account for its predecessor, S/CRS.

During most of its seven years, S/CRS received considerably less funding than requested.¹⁹ After providing small amounts of start-up funding in the first three fiscal years of operation (FY2005-FY2007), Congress, beginning in FY2008, appropriated substantial amounts to a newly created account for S/CRS and its activities, as well as for USAID's CSI activities.²⁰ (See **Table 1**, below.) In FY2010, Congress also began appropriating funding for a USAID Complex Crises Fund (CCF) that initially was used only for USAID CSI activities; recently, USAID has agreed to share funding from this account with the State Department and other agencies.

For its first 10 months, the CSO Bureau drew on funds appropriated by Congress for S/CRS in FY2012. This appropriation consisted of up to \$35 million as a transfer from the State Department's Diplomatic and Consular Programs (D&CP) account, and \$8.5 million in overseas contingency operations (OCO) funding. The actual amount transferred to S/CRS and the CSO Bureau for FY2012 was \$21.8 million. Because funds were carried over from previous years, funding for S/CRS and CSO in FY2012 totaled some \$60.9 million.

¹⁸ Funding amounts cited in this section were taken from State Department documents or provided by CSO.

¹⁹ For details on prior year requests, see CRS Report RL32862, *Peacekeeping/Stabilization and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on the Civilian Response/Reserve Corps and other Civilian Stabilization and Reconstruction Capabilities*, by Nina M. Serafino.

²⁰ This account was originally named the Civilian Stabilization Initiative (CSI) account. In FY2012, the account was renamed the Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO) account.

FY2013 Request and Congressional Action

The Administration's FY2013 request for the CSO Bureau totaled \$56.5 million. The House Appropriations Committee provided up to \$35 million as a transfer from the D&CP account, plus \$8.5 million in overseas contingency operations funding. (H.R. 5857, H.Rept. 112-494). The Senate Appropriations committee provided up to \$56.5 million transferred from D&CP (S. 3241, S.Rept. 112-172).

With the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (H.J.Res. 117, P.L. 112-175), CSO officials anticipate a shortfall in FY2013. The continuing resolution provides for appropriations to continue at the FY2012 level plus 0.612% through March 27, 2013. However, CSO officials state that the FY2012-appropriated level of \$30.3 million is too low a baseline because it took into account the existence of funds available from previous fiscal years. CSO estimates that for FY2013, \$8.0 million remains available from previous fiscal years. The FY2012-appropriated level and plus-up combined with the carryover fall short of the Administration request by a little less than one-third.

Table 1. Appropriated Funding for Civilian Stabilization Initiative/Civilian Stabilization Operations Activities

(\$ millions)

Office/Agency	FY2004- FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013 Request
S/CRS and CSO	14.0	35.8	55	80	34.9	30.3	56.5
USAID	NA	25.0	30	0	4.9	0	0
CCF ^a	NA	NA	NA	50	40	40	50

Source: Figures on CSO and S/CRS and USAID, courtesy of CSO, August 2012.

Note: CCF figures calculated by CRS, see CRS Report R42621, *State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2013 Budget and Appropriations*, by Susan B. Epstein, Marian Leonardo Lawson, and Alex Tiersky.

a. CCF funding is appropriated to USAID.

Issues for Congress

Members of Congress raised many questions with S/CRS that are also applicable to CSO, principally the bureau's potential contribution to U.S. interests abroad and how its functions overlap with other agencies. A third question is whether there are merits in the S/CRS model for U.S. crisis and conflict response that should be reexamined, particularly the value of a larger civilian response corps.

How Can CSO Contribute to U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security?

Many policymakers are uncertain about CSO's role in promoting U.S. foreign policy and national security. In public appearances, Ambassador Barton has acknowledged the difficulty of demonstrating CSO's value as well as the feasibility of preventing conflict, but stated his intention to quickly prove the bureau's utility. Proponents point to two ways in which CSO can contribute to U.S. foreign policy and national security:

- CSO offers not only the theoretical grounding of conflict specialists, but also the practical ability to apply that expertise to policy and program development and prioritization, bringing all tools of statecraft to bear in a “whole-of-government” approach, according to some analysts.
- CSO personnel routinely look at problems from an interagency perspective. Knowledge of all agencies’ potential contributions to U.S. assistance efforts abroad is a crucial element in planning successful efforts, but one that is often lacking, according to some analysts.

Some analysts would question whether CSO itself, or in conjunction with USAID, can stimulate sufficient awareness of the possibilities and means for interagency cooperation to prevent and manage instability and conflict, not to mention the additional task of “mainstreaming” conflict expertise. Some suggest that an alternate or supplementary approach might include the expansion of programs to foster “national security professionals” with interagency experience and networks.²¹

Do CSO Functions Overlap with Those of Other Agencies?

DOD and USAID have substantial roles in crisis and conflict response and prevention, and other agencies have played a role as well. The greatest concern about overlap among agencies during the S/CRS years centered on existing USAID offices. (Some analysts also advocate placing the S/CRS function of administering the CRC under USAID, which they view as more practiced at exercising “operational” functions.)

Much attention was focused on potential overlap with the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). Created in 1994 (with Ambassador Barton serving as its first director), OTI carries out a wide variety of short-term programs, usually two to three years, in unstable environments such as transitions from violent conflict to peace or after the fall of authoritarian governments, as well as those existing during other crisis situations.²² OTI officials state that CSO’s current focus on short-term targeted “eyes and ears on the ground” activities thus far respect what they regard as the appropriate division of labor between the two offices, with CSO providing personnel to carry out specific tasks and OTI funding and implementing larger programs. (OTI, in line with plans announced in the QDDR,²³ has expanded significantly since 2009, about doubling from over 80 to some 170 staff and contracted experts and roughly equaling the size of the CSO Bureau.) The CSO Assistant Secretary’s job description addresses another S/CRS function that overlapped with USAID’s Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. That document states that CSO is the home bureau for State Department, not government-wide, “expertise on conflict prevention, crisis response, and stabilization.”

²¹ See *Silver Bullet*, p. 41. For more on current national security professionals programs and proposals, see CRS Report RL34565, *National Security Professionals and Interagency Reform: Proposals, Recent Experience, and Issues for Congress*, by Catherine Dale.

²² For more on OTI, see CRS Report R40600, *USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives After 15 Years: Issues for Congress*, by Marian Leonardo Lawson. OTI and USAID’s Conflict Management and Mitigation are discussed in detail in *Peacefare*, pp. 137-148.

²³ QDDR, p. 137.

Should the United States Possess a Broad Interagency Civilian Capability for Conflict and Stabilization Missions?

The establishment of CSO and the downsizing of its operative arm, the CRC, represent a second generation concept of the functions and organization of a civilian capability for crises and conflict response. Apart from budget constraints, the evolution of this concept appears to be based in large part on a reassessment of scenarios for future U.S. military operations. The prior S/CRS model was based on the perception that growing instability would require periodic U.S. military interventions, or would demand substantial U.S. civilian governance assistance, for which a sizable civilian interagency state-building cadre for S&R operations under strong, informed, and practiced State Department leadership would be necessary. The CSO model, with its narrower functions, responds to current perceptions that targeted conflict prevention efforts, often in partnership with other countries, may forestall the need for military interventions and that, in any event, large-scale military S&R interventions are highly unlikely.

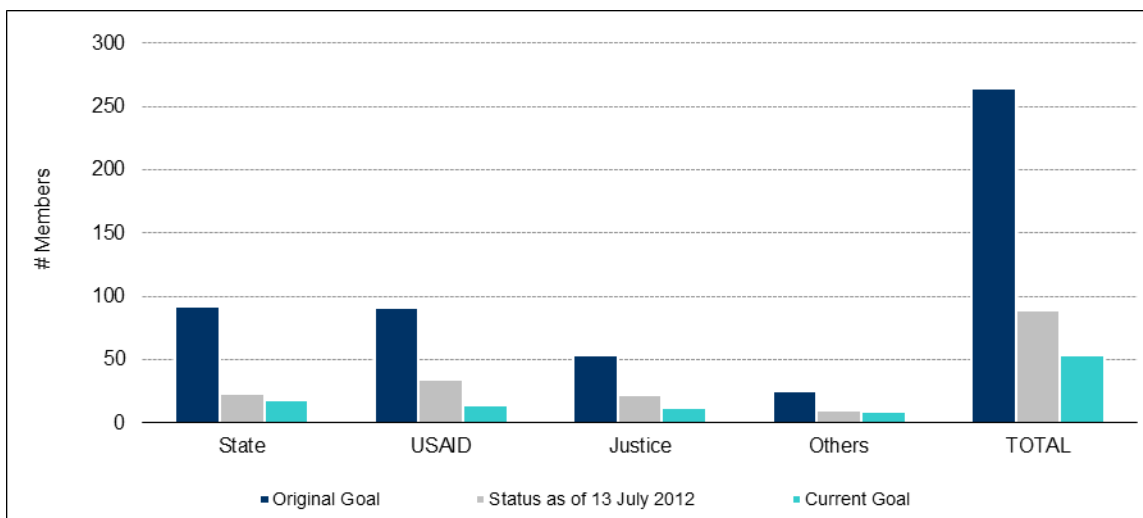
Other analysts, however, believe future U.S. military interventions are a real possibility, and that there is a continuing need for substantial civilian state-building efforts. In their opinion, the decisions to narrow the scope of State Department leadership of interagency crisis and conflict response capabilities and to downsize and restructure the CRC are ill-advised. They predict future responses will suffer from the lack of a State Department unit that has, like the military, continually prepared for such interventions and efforts, as well as from the loss of a large cadre of skilled interagency personnel trained to work with the military. Further, in lieu of a sizable CRC, U.S. military forces will most likely be called on to carry out state-building tasks during interventions and in post-conflict environments. For conflict prevention activities, some view a continued need for broad interagency participation in the CRC, arguing that such personnel from can “reach back” to draw on the deep expertise in their home agencies.

Looking Ahead

CSO is a work in progress. Assistant Secretary Barton has stated that he will report on the success of CSO’s four test cases in April 2013, at the one-year mark of his period in office. His assessment of CSO activities may provide information to Congress that will assist in judging the utility of conflict prevention activities undertaken not only by CSO, but also by all U.S. agencies. At some point, Ambassador Barton may also provide thoughts on CSO’s future work. His ideas may contribute to a congressional evaluation of the division of labor for conflict prevention activities among U.S. government agencies and of the appropriate State Department’s leadership and coordination role. In the meantime, policymakers who view CSO’s work as important to U.S. interests may wish to review the Continuing Appropriations Resolution’s substantial de facto reduction in CSO funding as part of the consideration of a final FY2013 budget.

Appendix. Civilian Response Corps Membership

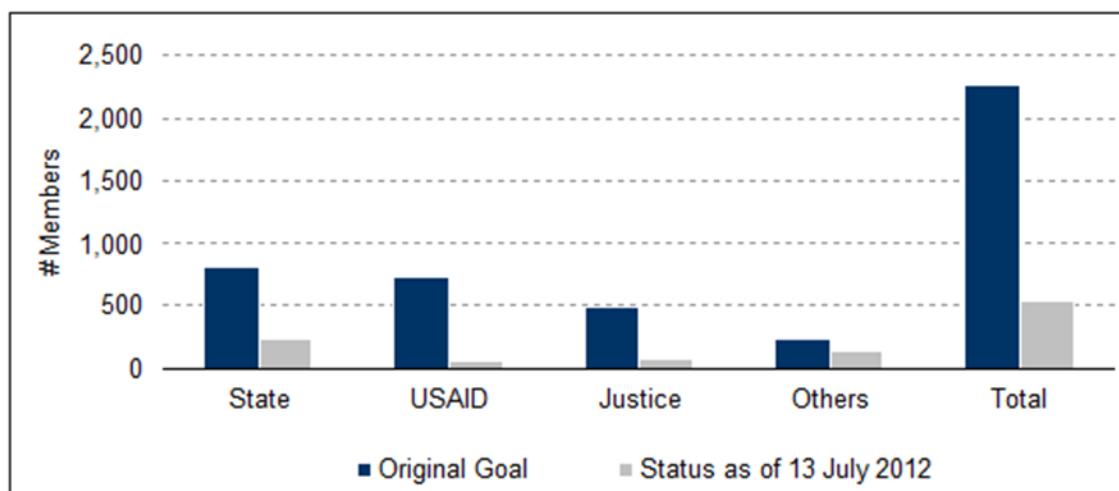
Figure A-1. Civilian Response Corps Active Component (CRC-A) Composition



Source: 2012 and current goal data courtesy of CSO, August 2012.

Note: The “original goal” was formulated by S/CRS in 2010.

Figure A-2. Civilian Response Corps Standby Component (CRC-S) Composition



Source: 2012 and current goal data courtesy of CSO, August 2012.

Notes: The “original goal” was formulated by S/CRS in 2010. Currently, there is no established goal for CRC-S membership.

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